

HCS HB 547 -- NONMEDICAL PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR: Allen

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 9 to 3. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Social Services by a vote of 6 to 3.

This bill prohibits the Department of Social Services from seeking, applying for, accepting, or renewing any waiver of requirements established under 7 U.S.C. Section 2015(o) regarding eligibility for participation in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This provision must terminate on January 1, 2019. Any ongoing savings resulting from a reduction in state expenditures due to modification of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program under these provisions or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program effective on August 28, 2015, and subject to appropriations, must be used to provide child care assistance for single parent households, education assistance, transportation assistance, and job training for individuals receiving benefits under the programs as allowable under applicable state and federal law.

Any benefit other than cash assistance must not be considered a benefit granting categorical eligibility for SNAP under 7 U.S.C. Section 2014(a).

The gross income standards of SNAP must not exceed the standards specified in 7 U.S.C. Section 2014(c), and the resource limit standards of SNAP must not exceed the standards specified in 7 U.S.C. Section 2014(g)(1). Any benefit other than cash assistance must not be considered a benefit exempting households from the resource limits under 7 U.S.C. Section 2014(j).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill makes changes to the SNAP Program by requiring able-bodied working adults without dependents to work to be eligible for the SNAP Program, commonly referred to as food stamps. Missouri currently has a waiver of this requirement, and the bill is prohibiting the department from obtaining the waiver in the future. Traditionally, there is categorical eligibility for SNAP. Missouri's categorical eligibility is not broad, and the bill will maintain status quo to ensure it is not expanded. Missouri has not expanded income eligibility past federal income requirements and asset limits, and the bill ensures that this continues. The bill is a control mechanism that would not allow the department to weaken controls over the SNAP program and will really only impact the work requirements.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Allen.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the bill would tie the hands of the department in the event of future labor market changes and would prevent the department from requesting waivers if things change in Missouri. The department is not required to seek waivers in the future, so why prohibit it and cause issues that the General Assembly will have to tackle in the future. Categorical eligibility does not result in substantial SNAP benefits going to non-needy families. In 2011, only 2% of SNAP households nationally had household incomes over 100% of the federal poverty level, so the change to categorical eligibility is unnecessary.

Testifying against the bill was Empower Missouri.